SOURCES OF JOB INFORMATION FOR MIGRANTS*

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THE PROBLEM

Perhaps the degree of accuracy with which migration has been recorded and studied in the U.S. is unique to the relative youth of the nation in historical terms. However, many of the phenomena associated with migration that have economic significance are still very poorly understood. One of these is the functioning of the rural-urban labor market in the migration process. This particular aspect of the migration process is examined in this paper.

Specific information on the job research process of 396 migrants from Eastern Kentucky is reported and compared with previous research findings – with subsequent generalizations regarding the policy implications of observed patterns of job search activity.[1]

The Appalachian portion of Eastern Kentucky was selected for studying the rural-urban labor market because the region has a long history of low incomes, high unemployment, and high out-migration. Analysis of the labor market aspects of out-migration from the area may offer an important basis for evaluating the role of out-migration in rural development policies for depressed areas.

UNIQUE SURVEY

The data reported here were obtained in personal interviews with migrants. This rather difficult, time consuming, and expensive method of obtaining data has advantages over secondary data provided by the dicenial census or the Social Security Administration continuous registry, however.[2] These sources do not provide detailed information which explains how the migration-job mobility process works, although information about the magnitude of migration and selectivity according to demographic characteristics is provided. The data reported here represent only a small portion of the information obtained in the detailed interviews.

Sociologists have studied the social structures which establish relationships between the migrant and the receiving community before the moves [10, 7, 1]. Economists have provided few insights into the functioning of the labor market during the migration process; however, one notable exception cited by Fuller [2] is the work of Smith [8, 9] which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

SOURCE OF JOB INFORMATION

Each migrant was asked the following question. "How did you hear about that first job in (destination city)?" The response was recorded in one of 14 items in a check list. The data reported in Table 1 were constructed from the 14 original categories. Perhaps most startling is the fact that only 2 percent of the migrants obtained their first job through the State-Federal employment services.

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[1] The sample consists of 396 migrants from Eastern Kentucky (161 migrants to Lexington, Kentucky and 235 migrants to Cincinnati, Ohio). Those who were interviewed in Cincinnati arrived there between 1955 and 1970. The Lexington portion of the sample migrated in the five years between April 1, 1965 and April 1, 1970. All interviews were conducted during November and December, 1971, a minimum of 19 months after migration. Therefore, the respondents had lived in the city at least 19 months and, on the average, 6.2 years.

[2] The continuous work history - one percent sample has provided a wealth of research on labor mobility [5, 6, 4, 3].

Table 1. INFORMATION SOURCE FOR FIRST JOB OBTAINED BY MIGRANTS IN CITY OF DESTINATION*

Source	Number	Percentages
Independent Search	97	24.5
Classified Advertisement	32	8.1
Registered with Union	3	0.8
Ask Relatives E. Kentucky	5	1.3
Ask Relatives City	110	27.8
Ask Friends E. Kentucky	8	2.0
Ask Friends City	56	14.1
State Employment Agency E. Kentucky or City	8	2.0
Private Employment Agency E. Kentucky or City	9	2.3
Obtained Employment at Labor Pickup Point	3	0.8
No Search - No Work[a]	22	5.6
Other[b]	43	10.9
TOTAL	396	100.0[c]

[a]Includes 5 students, 5 unemployed, 8 retired, 4 persons with jobs apparently obtained prior to move.

[b]Consists primarily of company transfers from Eastern Kentucky to City and migrants contacted by company recruiters from city prior to moving.

[c]Total does not add due to rounding.

*Source: "An Economic Analysis of Migration From Rural Eastern Kentucky to Selected Urban Centers," University of Kentucky Contract No. NIH-70-2198 with the National Institutes of Health.

The largest single source of job information was relatives living in the city of destination. This category accounted for 28 percent of the initial job sources. Independent search on the part of the migrant accounted for 25 percent. The third largest category of information was friends living in the city, accounting for 14 percent.

Friends and relatives in the destination city accounted for 42 percent of the initial job sources. Combining friends and relatives in the origin and destination communities accounts for a total of 45 percent of initial job contacts. Adding those using independent search to those using friends and relatives, we account for 70 percent of the migrants' initial job sources. In summary, they depend mostly on relatives and friends, or they obtain their jobs through their own resourcefulness with little or no assistance from public agencies.

Smith reported that 48 percent of Southern white migrants used friends or relatives in obtaining their first job, in a 1953 study of migrants in Indianapolis who had migrated from 1940 to 1952 [8, p. 91]. Smith concluded that "Formal media such as Employment Service information and newspapers played a minor role in job acquisition" [8, p. 92]. The Southern white migrant stream studied by Smith most closely resembles those of this study.

In a 1961 study of migration in Wilmington, Delaware, Tilly and Brown [10, p. 148] asked a slightly different question . . . "Did anyone help you or encourage you to come to Wilmington?" Using a process which listed "Kin" and "Friends" as the categorical source of information when that was the only source mentioned, they found 27 and 12 percent in the two categories, respectively. Under their sorting procedure some of the 27 percent of the sample listed in the "Other" category also used "Kin" and "Friends" as well as another source. Tilly and Brown suggest that the importance of kinfolk challenges the common assumption of the overwhelming importance of work to migration. They suggest that the migrants' friends and relatives most likely provide such items as lodging, personal care, food, short term cash, and often emotional support.

In contrast, Schwarzweller and Brown [7, 1] indicated that the migrant family quite often used the stem-family form of kinship to provide information in the origin communities about jobs. It can be concluded that the arrangement not only aided the migrant after moving, but actually induced migration

from the origin to destination once the initial migrants were established in an area.

The importance of friends and relatives as sources of job information in the migration process is further documented by the data of this study. The evidence that friends and relatives are a major source of job information – not just a source of aid in social adjustment – supports the view of most economists that migration is primarily a response to economic opportunity (jobs).

Although there is some difference of opinion regarding the exact role friends and relatives play, studies by Smith,Tilly and Brown, and Schwarzweller and Brown all show that using friends and relatives in the migration process has decreased very little over time. The lack of utilization of existing formal media, especially the Federal-State employment service, indicates that the impact of such institutions on increasing competition in this segment of the labor market may be negligible. The failure of the Federal-State employment services to play a larger role in providing job information is of great interest but cannot be adequately discussed within this paper. We propose in succeeding sections to examine several measures of the effect on the migrant of using friends and relatives versus other sources of information.

SKILLED VERSUS UNSKILLED AND JOB INFORMATION SOURCES

Examination of the data indicates the importance of friends and relatives in locating the first job in the city. Although locating "a job" immediately after moving may be important to the migrant, the type of job that he obtains may have lasting effects upon his satisfaction with the move. Certainly one relevant measure of the success of the migrant with respect to the source of job information is whether they obtain skilled or unskilled jobs.

To test the hypothesis that the source of job information would influence the migrant's ability to obtain a "skilled" job, a Chi Square table was constructed (Table 2). When the incidence of skilled and unskilled workers (last job, first year in city) is compared with the proportion of initial job sources that came from the category "friends and relatives" versus "all other" sources, we find that there is no basis for concluding that using "friends and relatives" provided migrants with more or less "skilled" jobs than "all other" sources of information.

Tilly and Brown [10, p. 150] found that blue collar workers were – "more likely to be linked to the city of destination primarily through kinfolk; white collar workers more often have multiple links with the city, and these links often include kinship." They, therefore, concluded that the blue collar workers in their sample of migrants to Wilmington, Delaware -- "migrated under the auspices of kinship considerably more often than the white collar workers did."

The two studies differ in design and focus of study and the contrast in findings is largely unexplained. One source of difference could be the fact that 37 percent of their sample (Tilly and Brown) were non-white while less than 5 percent of the migrants in this sample were non-white. Tilly and

Table 2. CHI SQUARE TEST FOR SELECTIVITY OF OCCUPATION ACCORDING TO SOURCE OF JOB INFORMATION*

Source of Information	Job Classification[a]		Row Total
	Skilled	Unskilled	
Relatives and Friends	66	107	173
Other	83	114	197
Column Total	149	221	370[b]

Chi Square with 1 degree of freedom = 0.453, $P > .50$

[a]Based on job classification of migrant at end of first year. "Skilled" includes Bureau of Census job codes: Professional, Technical, Kindred; Managers and Administrators; Clerical, and Craftsmen. All other job codes enumerated were included in the "Unskilled" category.

[b]Excludes 18 workers who were unemployed at end of year and 8 who were retired from the grand total of 396.

*Source: "An Economic Analysis of Migration From Rural Eastern Kentucky to Selected Urban Centers," University of Kentucky Contract No. NIH-70-2198 with the National Institutes of Health.

Table 3. COMPARISON OF EARNINGS OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD ACCORDING TO SOURCE OF JOB INFORMATION FOR TWO TIME PERIODS*

Income Period	Source of Information	Mean	t Value	Two Tail Probability
Heads' Wages First Year in 1971 Dollars[a]	Family and Friends N=(173)	$5452.69	-0.20	0.845
	All Other N=(202)	$5521.86		
Heads' Wages Last Year in City (1971)[b]	Family and Friends N=(177)	$7057.89	-0.88	0.377[c]
	All Other N=(205)	$7113.26		

[a]Excludes 8 retired at end of first year, resulting in the following observations: Family and Friends, 179; All Other, 209. The smaller samples reported for the two income periods are due to observations that were eliminated because of incomplete income information.

[b]Average length of residence 6.2 years.

[c]The F test for (Ho: $s_1^2 = s_2^2$) was significant at 1% significance level so a pooled variance estimate was used to calculate t value for this group.

*Source: "An Economic Analysis of Migration From Rural Eastern Kentucky to Selected Urban Centers," University of Kentucky Contract No. NIH-70-2198 with the National Institutes of Health.

Brown suggest that there is little in their data to indicate differences in use of kinship between racial groupings, however [10, p. 151].

EARNINGS AND JOB INFORMATION SOURCE

As a measure of the effect of job information sources on the "well-being" of the migrant, a comparison of earnings of the head of household for two time periods was made.

Heads' average wages in the first year after migration differed by only $69.17 when compared by source of job information. The resulting "t" test was insignificant (Table 3). Heads' average wages in the last year differed by only $55.37 in 1971 when compared according to the original source of job information. Again, this was not a significant difference.

The impact of any differential effect of job information sources on earnings should be most apparent in the earnings of the head of household. A comparison of total family earnings also failed to yield any significant differences in earnings by source of information.

After examining the relationship between earnings and source of job information, we conclude that there is no difference in the short run (first year) and the long run (last year) earnings of the head of household when compared by major sources of job information (Friends and Relatives = 45 percent, All Other = 55 percent). Hence, information from other sources (including the more formal media) were not superior in terms of income to that obtained from friends and relatives.

EMPLOYMENT STABILITY AND JOB INFORMATION SOURCE

The level of income earned on the job is important, but job stability is another facet of the employment picture that is important. Moving from one area of large scale unemployment and underemployment only to find oneself in a similar situation in a strange environment would be of little comfort to the migrant. Again, the reliability of job source information from friends and relatives is compared with all other sources.

Comparing the weeks of layoff experienced during the first year by the migrant head of household for those receiving their job information from friends and family with those using all other sources revealed no significant differences between the two groups (Table 4). We recognize that this is not a strong test of the reliability of the job contact independent of other influences which would induce layoff such as general economic conditions.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Given the levels of incomes, unemployment and underemployment in Eastern Kentucky, there is little

Table 4. **COMPARISON OF WEEKS OF LAYOFF DURING FIRST YEAR IN CITY BY SOURCE OF JOB INFORMATION***

Source of Information[a]	Mean	t Value	Two Tail Probability
Family and Friends (N=179)	1.41 weeks	0.70	0.482
All Other (N=209)	1.07 weeks		

[a]Excludes 8 retired at end of first year.

*Source: "An Economic Analysis of Migration From Rural Eastern Kentucky to Selected Urban Centers," University of Kentucky Contract No. NIH-70-2198 with the National Institutes of Health.

question that there was substantial "push" for migrants to leave the area. Examination of the data reveals utilization of friends and relatives to acquire the first job in the city by forty-five percent of the sample. The next largest group was persons using independent search (24.5 percent). Federal-State employment services were apparently only occasionally used by the migrants.

The question arises as to what extent friends and relatives exert a "pull" influence and determine the ultimate destination of the migrant after he has been subjected to substantial "push" in the form of economic disincentives in Eastern Kentucky. Research by Tilly and Brown [10] suggests that the "pull" is a significant factor in the migration process. Data analyzed here suggest that the "pull" of friends and relatives is very influential in determining the final destination of the migrant.

Additional examination of the association between the source of job information and type of job (skilled, unskilled) did not indicate that the distribution of jobs was different than should be expected from this sample. Comparing earnings of the migrant head of household indicated that although those using friends and relatives earned slightly less than those using all other sources, the difference was not significant. The length of job layoff experienced also did not differ with source of information.

Whether the failure to use formal media as a source of job information is due to lack of awareness of its availability or not cannot be determined from this study. It is apparent that sources of information other than friends and relatives are not superior to that provided by friends and relatives in economic terms (earnings of migrant).

As mentioned previously, the migrants typically do not use public employment agencies to obtain their first job but rely heavily on friends and relatives. This suggests that migrant streams to a given destination, once established, will continue for several generations and, secondly, that the rural-urban employment market may be relatively insensitive in the short run to change in potential economic returns to migrants in alternative destinations.

In recent years there has been much talk about trying to divert migration streams from the larger cities to smaller cities. This is based upon several assumptions regarding the desirability of migrants in large cities. It has been presumed that migrants are marginally more expensive (in terms of social overhead costs) in large cities than preceding inhabitants. There is very little research to substantiate this claim. Regardless whether migrants provide positive returns to private and social accounts, it would appear that efforts to stem or redirect the existing migration patterns will depend on more functional public employment agencies than have existed in the past to divert migrants from the existing migration flows.

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